

**Afflictive obscurations according to the Prasangika and the Svatantrika Madhyamika tenets:**

	<b>Prasangika Madhyamika</b>	<b>Svatantrika Madhyamika</b>
<b>Root of Samsara</b>	Ignorance that apprehends true existence	Ignorance that apprehends a self-sufficient, substantially existent self
<b>Other delusions induced by the root of Samsara</b>	Anger, attachment, jealousy, coarser ignorance (e.g. ignorance that apprehends a self-sufficient, substantially existent self), and so forth	Anger, attachment, jealousy, coarser ignorance (e.g. ignorance that apprehends a permanent, partless, independent self), and so forth
<b>Seeds (potential)</b>	Seeds of the ignorance that apprehends true existence and the seeds of the other delusions that are induced by that ignorance	Seeds of the ignorance that apprehends a self-sufficient, substantially existent self and seeds of the other delusions that are induced by that ignorance

According to the Prasangika Madhyamika tenet, ignorance apprehending true existence is the root of Samsara because it induces the other afflictive emotions, contaminated actions (karma) and the three types of suffering.

Aryadeva says in his **Four Hundred [Stanzas]**:

*As the tactile sense [pervades] the body  
Confusion is present in them all.  
By overcoming confusion one will also  
Overcome all afflictive emotions.*

In the body the tactile sense factor pervades all other sense organs such as the eye, the ear, etc. It acts as a basis for the other senses without which they could not exist. Confusion (bewilderment) is afflictive ignorance apprehending phenomena to exist truly/inherently. Similar to the tactile sense it is present in and pervades all afflictive emotions such as attachment and anger. Therefore, ignorance is the principal afflictive emotion and by overcoming it one will naturally overcome the other afflictive emotions.

The commentary on Aryadeva's **Four Hundred [Stanzas]** says:

*By obscuring the realization of the truth, confusion (bewilderment) engages in excessive superimposition regarding the true existence of things. Attachment and so forth also engage in attributing characteristics of attractiveness and unattractiveness only upon the nature of things postulated by confusion, they do not operate separately from confusion. They are also supported by confusion because confusion is the primary factor.*

Regarding the generation of attachment and anger, first ignorance apprehending an object to exist truly arises. This induces an improper mental projection which apprehends a truly existent attractiveness or unattractiveness of the object. In dependence on this projection attachment or anger towards the object arise which in turn give rise to contaminated actions (karma) and the three types of suffering.

<b>Confusion/ Root of Samsara</b>	<b>Improper mental projection</b>	<b>Afflictive emotion</b>	<b>Action (karma)</b>	<b>Suffering</b>
Ignorance apprehending an object's true existence →	Improper mental projection apprehending the object's truly existent attractiveness →	Attachment that exaggerates the object's attractiveness →	Contaminated actions (karma) of body, speech, and mind →	The three types of suffering (suffering of suffering, etc.)
Ignorance apprehending an object's true existence →	Improper mental projection apprehending the object's truly existent unattractiveness →	Anger that exaggerates the object's unattractiveness →	Contaminated actions (karma) of body, speech, and mind →	The three types of suffering (suffering of suffering, etc.)

Therefore, the analogy of ignorance apprehending true existence is the root of a poisonous tree. The analogy of the other afflictions, contaminated karma and suffering is the branches, twigs and leaves of that tree. Just as one needs to cut the root of the poisonous tree in order to prevent it from growing poisonous branches etc. likewise one needs to overcome ignorance in order to prevent it from inducing other afflictive emotions, contaminated actions and suffering. Further, the only antidote that is able to eliminate the root ignorance is a meditative absorption that realizes emptiness directly. By repeatedly and continuously entering into such meditative absorption one is able to gradually overcome the root ignorance and its seed (the potential for ignorance to manifest again). Having eliminated ignorance one has also eliminated the other afflictive emotions, their seeds etc., for if the cause is destroyed the results will not be able to arise again.

From the *Secrets of the Thathagata Sutra*:

*Shantamati, it is thus. Just as when a tree is cut at the root, all its branches and leaves as well as all the small twigs will come to dry. So, Shantamati, similarly, when the view of the transitory collection (the ignorance that apprehends the true existence of the self) is extinguished all the primary and secondary afflictive emotions will come to be extinguished.*

English: ignorance/misperception/ misapprehension/unawareness

Tibetan: མ་རིག་པ། - *Ma-Rig-pa* (*ma* = not/non, *Rig-pa* = knower, awareness, to know, to be aware)

English: confusion/ignorance/bewilderment/mental darkness/dullness/close-mindedness

Tibetan: གཉི་མུག་ - *Ti-mug*

English: improper mental projection/ false mental projection/improper mental attention/conception of wrong thinking

Tibetan: ཚུལ་མིན་ཡིད་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ནམ་ཉིད་གྲུ་ - *Tsuel-min Yi-je kyi Nam-tog*

(*Tsuel-min* = improper, *Yi-je* = mental engagement/mental contemplation/take to mind/attention, *kyi* = genitive, *Nam-tog* = conceptuality/discursiveness/preconceived ideas/superstition)

## THE WAY IN WHICH MERE CONVENTIONALITIES APPEAR AND DO NOT APPEAR TO THE THREE BEINGS

As explained earlier, childish ordinary beings are deceived by the appearances of inherent existence, whereas from the perspective of the three beings, fabricated conventional phenomena are dependently arisen and thus mere conventionalities. From the perspective of the three beings, fabricated phenomena are mere conventionalities and not truths because the three beings have eliminated **afflictive obscurations** (and thereby the concealer ignorance).

However, the three beings are still affected by **cognitive obscurations**, which are the *imprints* of the root ignorance and the *imprints* of the other afflictive emotions induced by the root ignorance. Those cognitive obstructions are the obstructions to omniscience, for they are the obstruction Bodhisattvas have to overcome in order to attain the omniscient state of a Buddha.

Nonetheless, mere conventionalities do not appear to the three beings while they are absorbed in the meditative equipoise realizing emptiness directly. They only appear to the three beings during the subsequent attainment when awarenesses are tainted by cognitive obscurations. The reason for mere conventionalities appearing to the three beings only while being tainted by cognitive obscurations is that conventional phenomena still appear to them as existing inherently. However, even though they appear to exist inherently the three being's awarenesses during the period of subsequent attainment know that they do not exist the way they appear which is why from their perspective they are mere conventionalities.

